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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. ARMS PROCUREMENTS, U.S.-
CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

1. Summary: Major Chinese-language Taipei dailies centered their coverage September 27 on the suicide of a well-known local psychiatrist; the controversy sparked by President Chen Shui-bian's proposed "Jung Pang" project (to set up a US\$250 million fund for financing development in Central America); the filibustering expected in the Legislative Yuan session today during the scheduled vote on the National Communications Committee bill and the Cross-Strait Peace Promotion bill; and independent Legislator Li Ao's speech delivered at Fudan University in Shanghai. All the Chinese-language newspapers ran a full-page advertisement placed by the Government Information Office which urgently requested that KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou revise the KMT version of the present National Communications Commission bill. In terms of the U.S. arms procurement bill, almost all Chinese-language dailies carried in their inside pages news stories on Taiwan's Minister of National Defense Lee Jye's remarks that he hopes that the opposition parties will "stop at an appropriate point" their blocking of the U.S. arms procurement bill.

2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a commentary in the pro-unification "United Daily News" commented on the blocked U.S. arms procurement bill, saying President Chen should not blame the pan-Blue camp for the blocked deal but should be angry with the United States for selling Taiwan weapons without really treating Taiwan as a "nation." An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post," however, urged Washington to put the arms deal on hold instead of pressing for its passage because Taiwan should "befriend" China rather than confront it with military procurements. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" discussed U.S. President George W. Bush's turning down Chinese President Hu Jintao's recent proposal that Washington "co-manage the Taiwan Strait" with China. The article said "for all his lack of knowledge and appreciation for the complexities of global politics, Bush does understand that the real threat to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait comes from the PRC itself." End summary.

1. U.S. Arms Procurements

A) "Who Has the Right to Feel Angry about the [U.S.] Arms Procurements [Situation]?"

Journalist Ting Wan-ming said in the "United Notes" column in the conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (9/27):

". Of course Chen Shui-bian has the right to be angry about the procrastination-hobbled U.S. arms procurement bill. But what A-bian should really be angry about is the fact that the United States treats Taiwan as a generous spendthrift, selling us those weapons with price tags twice or three times more expensive than those found in the international market, making it almost impossible for Taiwan to afford them. He should be angry that Taiwan has no idea at all about what the submarines it wants to buy will look like whereas Washington is asking for an outrageous price for them. He should also be angry that Uncle Sam treats Taiwan as a 'garbage recycling bin' by forcefully selling us second-hand anti-submarine aircraft and while telling us that they are new.

"A-bian should fume all the more about the fact that Taiwan is defending U.S. strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region for Washington, while Uncle Sam is unappreciative and said that the United States 'cannot help defend Taiwan' if Taiwan does not defend itself. President Chen stopped over in the States, but he was treated as if he were 'contained' by the U.S. government. He received a 'Human Rights Award' from the right-wing U.S. congressmen, but nonetheless, he had to lay low and act submissive.

"A-bian should not blame the pan-Blue camp but should blame the United States for selling us 'used' weapons, taking advantage of Taiwan for money, and promoting the sale of armaments to Taiwan but refusing to treat the island as a 'nation.' The arms procurements list created by the Americans is full of unreasonable price tags and weaponry items, but A-bian not only dares not to say a word to the United States; instead, he is blaming some people in Taiwan. ."

B) "U.S. Ignoring Taiwan Vote?"

The conservative, pro-unification "China Post"
[circulation: 30,000] editorialized (9/27):

". While the Chen administration has slashed the arms budget from the original US\$18 billion to US\$15 billion and finally to US\$11 billion, the legislature's approval of it would be tantamount to overrule and betrayal of the people's decision. In a civil society, another referendum is required to overturn the result of a previous one. It is doubtful that either the Chen administration, the opposition, or the U.S., is ready for that. .

"Since Taiwan's democratic transfer of power from an anti-independence government to an anti-China one, the island's strategic status has drastically changed, from being an unsinkable anti-communist aircraft-carrier to an anti-China frontline provocateur. The island would be the first casualty in a China-U.S. war.

"Taiwan's best way out is befriend the giant neighbor, not confront it militarily. This is also the best policy for the world's sole superpower to cope with a potential competitor. Supporting Taiwan independence is the only cause that could prompt China to wage war.

"Washington should put the arms deal on hold instead of pressing it through."

2. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

"Chen's PRC Gambit Echoes U.S. Stance"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News"
[circulation: 20,000] editorialized (9/27):

"The announcement by President Chen Shui-bian in Miami September 22 that he was willing to hold 'rational dialogue' with People's Republic of China State Chairman Hu Jintao 'without any preconditions' signified another in a series of goodwill gestures by the Democratic Progressive Party administration.

"With this announcement, the president set aside his previous insistence that a Chen-Hu meeting should take place in the PRC itself, but, as noted by U.S. officials, the phrase 'no preconditions' also indicates that both sides, including Beijing's Chinese Communist Party regime, should not set preconditions.

"Hence, President Chen also signaled clearly that his DPP administration would not accept the PRC regime's precondition that the Taiwan government must accept Beijing's 'one-China' principle, which defines Taiwan as part of 'China,' before any official cross-strait talks can take place. .

"Preoccupied with the physical disaster of Hurricane Katrina and the severe political damage caused by the poor performance of the federal government in disaster response and relief, Bush paid relatively little attention to the summit with Hu. . Hu also inserted a stunning proposal for Washington to 'join the Chinese side in safeguarding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and opposing so-called Taiwan independence.' Despite the shower of apparent goodwill gestures by the PRC state chairman, Bush did not directly reply to Hu's proposal for 'co-management' of the Taiwan Strait. .

"The reason for Bush's reluctance to endorse Hu's 'co-management' proposal was quite clear. For all his lack of knowledge and appreciation for the complexities of global politics, Bush does understand that the real threat to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait comes from the PRC itself. .

". [T]he notion floated by Hu of the so-called 'co-management' of the Taiwan Strait by the U.S. and China was extremely unrealistic and received the treatment it deserved. Bush simply ignored it. Instead, Bush directly told Hu that Beijing should not bypass Taiwan's governing Democratic Progressive Party and

only engage in talks with the opposition pan-blue camp. Bush's repeated calls on Hu to open talks with Taiwan's democratically elected government confirms that the relationship between Taiwan and the U.S. has improved considerably since the tensions before the March 2004 presidential election. ."

KEEGAN